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**To:** [Martinez, Jacquelynn](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Support for Reduced Public Defense Caseloads  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 24, 2024 8:08:53 AM

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**From:** Nancy Mattson <nmattsonlaw@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 23, 2024 6:14 PM  
**To:** OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>  
**Subject:** Support for Reduced Public Defense Caseloads

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To the Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court:

I have been a public defender for more than thirty years, starting in Minnesota. In 2000, I came to Washington and served as a King County public defender for the next 23 years. I have been a line attorney and a supervisor.

As a line attorney, I always worked long hours and often worked every day of the week to keep up with my obligations to properly serve my clients. As a supervisor, I saw how much harder the workload became year after year for the attorneys, as the case numbers increased and discovery ballooned, becoming more voluminous and complex. The demands of a public defender's work have always been difficult. Over the years, I have watched those demands become impossible.

Last year, I made the difficult decision to leave the King County Department of Public Defense. I was supervising and carrying a caseload. Had the caseloads not been so excessive, I doubt that I would have left. I know that many of my colleagues have made the same difficult decision.

The State of Washington has lost a lot of good public defenders. If we want to attract and retain good lawyers in the future to serve as public defenders, these lawyers need to be given reasonable caseloads. If Washington fails to do this, public defense clients will suffer the consequences.

My heart remains in public defense. I accepted a contract position with the Washington State Office of Public Defense. I receive no benefits, but I have a manageable caseload. My clients often thank me for the time I am able to meet with them and to devote to their cases. I am grateful that I can do it.

Sincerely,

Nancy Mattson

**Nancy Mattson**  
**Law Office of Nancy Mattson**  
**P.O. Box 16601**  
**Seattle, WA 98116**  
**P: 206.940.1053**  
**E: [nmattsonlaw@gmail.com](mailto:nmattsonlaw@gmail.com)**

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